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THE INFLUENCE OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
ON FARM YOUTH

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by R. J. Baldwin, Director of Extension Service, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, delivered in the Land Grant College program, May 16, 1934.

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Twenty years ago boys and girls from American farms appeared before Congressional committees to tell them of their projects and to urge them to support the Smith-Lever Bill. Congressmen were interested in them and their work. I am sure that you too, are interested in young people and in the extension program of education which influences their lives so vitally and in such great numbers. At this moment there are in America a million boys and girls who are thinking in terms of projects being conducted under the extension system of the Federal Department of Agriculture and the Land Grant Colleges.

President Theodore Roosevelt said that "The hope of success lies in working with the boy, and not with the man." This truth has influenced leaders in building the program for farm youth. Growth and action characterize this second decade of life,- growth physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. The promotion of this well-balanced growth has continued to be the objective. It is expressed impressively in the emblem of Boys' and Girls' Clubs, the four H's, meaning four-square development of Head, Hand, Heart and Health.

The 4-H Club program has given boys and girls something of their own to do. It has given them a chance to work with real things; with animals and growing plants, with tools and materials. Their work has been well planned and purposeful, with real responsibilities which have been theirs to bear. Accuracy, skill, judgment and faithful recording of results has been required in every project. Courage and determination have been needed to carry on. Effort has been spurred on by competition. Winners have been gracious and losers generous. Problems have had to be met and obstacles overcome. Cooperation has been cultivated. These experiences have created staunch fiber upon which to build for the future and have developed new and enduring qualities of character and personality.

The horizon of farm youth has been broadened. They have become a part of a national movement. They have felt this in their county contests, fairs and achievement days. Many have had a wider view through their trips to the State Colleges, state and regional fairs. Each year delegates from each state attend the National 4-H Club Encampment in Washington. Here has been cultivated an understanding of their institutions and their government. They have been made to feel their citizenship and their responsibilities in government welfare. Through all has come opportunity for companionship and friendship. These are precious gems which enrich the lives of those who have learned through service to be unselfish, helpful, cheerful and thoughtful of others.

(over)

You will agree, I am sure, that the farm home has the greatest influence upon farm youth. During these twenty years millions of mothers have taken part in extension projects in home-making and child care. The magnitude and success of this effort toward better homes and better living is impressive, and it is in these better homes that the habits of farm youth are formed, their attitudes are shaped and their ideals are moulded.

To the boys and girls who have taken part in extension projects since 1914 have come an awakening to their talents, a new appreciation of their surroundings and associates, and an earnest desire to achieve and advance. High schools and colleges have had them in great numbers and have found them to be students with ambition and purpose. Their interest in agriculture and rural life has been nourished and stimulated. They can be found in every community in the land. They are good farmers, good homemakers and leaders of farm organizations.

The high hope of all who are associated with the agricultural extension system is that greater numbers of farm boys and girls may have these opportunities for growth in the future and that through their culture there may be greater advancement of agriculture and rural life in America.